

Bernard Noël. *Les yeux dans la couleur.* Paris : P.O.L, 2004. 224 Pages. ISBN 2-84682-024-4. 27 euros.

Over twenty-five living artists are visited via this latest book by Bernard Noël, their work meditated upon, viscerally and, to use a word he will not be overly eager to embrace, spiritually explored, digested and offered a language of appreciation not thought to be but provisional, caressive in the moment of the eyes' feasting. The very recent Cerisy international colloquium, held in July, 2005 and organised by Noël's excellent Italian translator and commentator, Fabio Scotto, has confirmed the complexity of the body-mind-language equations in both the poet's own creations and in the critical perspectives he tirelessly and so pertinently deploys in his analysis of works as diverse as those of Magritte, Moreau or Matisse, David, Géricault or Masson. *Les yeux dans la couleur* returns to the contemporary scene, to the possibility of drawing close to the artist's material life, of listening to his or her own developing conceptions of the plastic gesture, this, however, without proceeding to that mode of exchange characterising Noël's *Onze romans d'œil* or similar works such as *Le roman des nœuds* (on Christian Jaccard). Here, the manner is largely 'poetic', offering fragmented 'impressions', impressions entering the eye, harmonising with the mind and easing their way onto the page via the hand. Much in common, no doubt, here, with the mode of genesis of the artwork Noël gazes and meditates upon... Take, for example, *Chemin d'ardoise*, offered to André-Pierre Arnal. Impressions these seven poems may be, yet their structure is far from purely liberated from aesthetic consideration: each poem is formed of a tercet + a couplet + a second tercet + a single line; there is no effort to rhyme, but the syllabic count, whilst free, hovers around eight, with no line exceeding ten syllables and none less than four. Order and adventure Apollinaire advised almost a century ago, and it is certain that Noël's poetry has always remained equally alert to the resources of ordered form as to the joys of freedom, and even the excesses to which such freedom may entice us to give way from time to time: one thinks of *Bruits de langues*. To accede to the constraints of a certain nature, just like the abandonment of all constraint, would seem to provide a supplement of purpose and pertinence where, as is no doubt true for Noël, ontological and even ethical meaning can appear to tremble and crumble. Such gestures gird the loins, infuse energy at the very point may feel inclined to yield to a certain existential limpness. And, of course, *Chemin d'ardoise* generates much that is shrewdly relevant to that other (self-)creative gesture that is Arnal's, whilst maintaining an air of ease and natural-

ness at the heart of the adopted formal constraint: 1. the artist's seizing upon the ephemeral, its intrinsic trace, offering but a trace of a trace; 2. the power of such a trace in the eyes – and the only indirectly evoked spirit of artist and spectator; 3. the sheer beauty recognised via this given creation, which, yet, is felt to be less definitively inscribed on the stone than fleetingly traced, like all of presence – and, for that, more beautiful, more in touch, oddly enough, with that *fond d'originel* from which it, like all else, has arisen; 4. art as an implicitly mystical 'sacrifice', but without the full spiritual paraphernalia to give it a fullness of meaning; 5. art's flagrancy does not erase its ellipticalness: like the poem, or indeed any natural phenomenon, it is there, indisputable, yet cloaked in its inalienable strangeness; 6. the path that art offers, that *Chemin d'ardoise* offers, constitutes 'a path towards the self gone astray': in that sense all doing, all slowly unfolding being, is something of a path to our origin, our source, a path of return and restoration, of self-coincidence; 7. doubt melds here with (self-)invitation, finds its ease in the fact that 'life crackles at one's fingertips', the place of self-reenergising lying within: we are our own source, one might conclude; 8. meaning is thus to be found not in repose, in withdrawal, but rather 'in the eye of the whirlwind', at the centre of all our whys and dizzinesses and desires; 9. art's relation to presence is a central and continuing preoccupation, a question without firm response, Noël feels, yet one offering oblique and 'furtive' hints and surprises – and, if he feels too that this leaves us without basis for true knowing, his own persistence, like that of the artists he endlessly is drawn to, suggest that knowing is merely mobile, becoming, not a fixity, but an infinite journey.

Les yeux dans la couleur is a book for all shelves and one that confirms Bernard Noël as one of our greatest living poets and authentic thinkers.

Christian Doumet. *Horde*. Sens: Obsidiane, 2003. Version définitive. 61 pages. ISBN 2-911914-70-8. 11 euros; *La décharge de la lumière*. Nancy: La Dragonne, 2004. 59 pages. ISBN 2-913465-33-1. 18 euros.



fter the fire at the Belles-Lettres warehouse in 2002, various reprintings have been managed by Obsidiane, in difficult circumstances, and, in the case of Christian Doumet's *Horde*, this has allowed for the final tinkering with a powerful text oddly fusing some desired density and an aerated transparency and offering loosely contextualised fragments of a prose devoted to the life of the lords of Berzé. It is the